

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## ALFRED SADD OF THE GILBERT ISLANDS— "A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN"

We mentioned in a recent bulletin (No. 267) the story of the death, in heroic circumstances, of a young English missionary at the hands of the Japanese. We are now able to give a full account of his life and work, taken by permission from *London Calling*. It is by the Rev. Norman Goodall, formerly a Secretary of the London Missionary Society. Mr. Goodall has now succeeded Dr. William Paton as a Secretary of the International Missionary Council, and is now visiting Sweden in that capacity.

We believe that this story of "a very gallant gentleman" may be appreciated by Chaplains to the Forces and others who have to speak to men and boys.

"I think I could not start off better than by telling you a rather typical incident in the short life of Alfred Sadd. A Government officer on one of the northern Gilbert Islands was sitting in his bungalow working when his door was flung violently open and a cheery voice announced: 'Good morning. I'm Sadd.'

"'Really?' said the officer, 'I'm sorry to hear it. But I must say you don't look or sound very melancholy. Make yourself at home.' And that is exactly what Alfred Sadd did.

"This gay, breezy entry of his into a new situation was completely characteristic of him. He never needed an invitation to make himself at home. He *was* at home in all sorts of circumstances, and with strangers as well as friends. And, in defiance of his name, he was the embodiment of cheerfulness. When he was killed—killed in cold blood—someone who saw him die remembers him chiefly for the way in which he

kept up the spirits of his fellow-prisoners. This kind of thing was second nature to him.

"Sadd belonged to an Essex family and spent his boyhood years within easy range of river and sea. Boats were his daily companions, and he became a yachtsman of considerable skill. Very nimble with his hands, he was never at a loss for coping with a practical emergency. I knew him as a grand travelling companion; he would have made a great leader.

### Varied Gifts Concentrated on One Purpose

"Before he left school (he was at the Leys School, Cambridge) he knew that he was meant to be a missionary, and from those early days to his untimely death (he was only 33) his varied gifts and interests were concentrated on this one great purpose. This did not mean any narrowing of his activities. He knew he was in for a job in which a man cannot be too versatile. As a theological student he was still the cheerful inventor of new excitements.

"I remember that at a certain student conference he spent half his time constructing a twenty-foot whale for use in staging a dramatic presentation of the story of Jonah. Of course he played the part of Jonah, was chucked overboard with gusto from a stage ship, swallowed by the whale and duly vomited on to dry land. At another religious conference where the meetings were held in a great marquee, a roaring wind threatened the stability of the proceedings, so Sadd turned up at the meetings with twenty yards of rope wound round his middle in joyful anticipation of the worst.

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"When the time came for the fulfilment of his vocation, he was sent by the London Missionary Society to the kind of parish for which such a lad was born. It consisted of two million square miles of sea and two hundred square miles of land. This was the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in the Central Pacific. Parish itineration is by canoes, whale boats, and a little two-hundred-ton schooner, *John Williams V*.

"It is worth noting that name, by the way, for it links today's heroism with the beginnings of an old and noble tradition. It is almost a hundred and fifty years since the London Missionary Society was launched and began its work as the pioneer mission in the South Seas. 'Behold,' said one of its founders, 'the astonishing clusters of the South Sea Islands,' and one of the people who beheld and acted was an ironmonger's apprentice, John Williams. I think he and Sadd would have found a lot in common.

"Williams built himself a ship out of oddments, a wonderful 'Heath Robinson' affair. He called it *Messenger of Peace*, and in it he followed in the wake of Captain Cook, his boyhood's hero. Then he brought back to England such a story of adventure and of the wonders of the grace of God that the Corporation of London voted a contribution towards the purchase of a better ship, and off he went on further exploits.

"Explorer, botanist, writer, evangelist and pastor, he did an amazing job in the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tahiti and the New Hebrides. On the foundations that he laid, there have been built up communities of folk who long ago exchanged their barbarities for the arts of peace, and who, in turn, have sent out their own missionaries. But achievements of this kind are not accomplished without sacrifice, and Williams paid the price of a martyr's death.

"To commemorate him a new ship was built, bearing the famous name. These ships have carried a great succession of adventurers; others of them martyrs, too, like James Chalmers of New Guinea. And the latest in the succession, in this centenary year of the ship, is Alfred Sadd.

"With this vessel as his home and the vast spaces of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony as his parish, Sadd came into his element. All his gifts found full employment and he revelled in the difficulties of the job. Not that it was without costliness. This most companionable of men had to accept a life of great isolation. A coral-island home is romantic enough from a distance, but to settle down in it for years, with a thousand-

and-one discomforts and inconveniences, is no joke. Sadd was sensitive enough to know this, and there must have been times when the price was heavy. But he paid it with indomitable courage and unquenchable cheerfulness. 'I wouldn't be anywhere else in the world,' he wrote.

"Then came Pearl Harbour. At the time there happened to be only a very small company of missionaries in the Gilberts: Sadd, a woman teacher, and a senior missionary and his wife who were within a few years of retirement. Their headquarters was on an island that could not be defended, and the Government decided to evacuate. The authorities insisted on the women leaving, and urged that the men should go, too.

"Sadd took the line that his senior ought to leave, if only to be fit to come back for a few years' reconstruction after the war. He himself would stay. He was unmarried. There was work he could still do. It would be better for the islanders if one European remained. He was sure he ought not to go. In fact, he refused to. 'Unless I'm taken by force,' he said, 'I stay.' As a matter of fact I had discussed this very point with him when I was in the Gilberts just after the outbreak of war in Europe, so I was not surprised when he sent me his decision in a letter which finished up in this way:

"'If the Japs come they come, and that will be that, and if they don't this will continue to be this, and there's nothing more one can do about it. And, anyway, I have finished the accounts of this Gilbert Islands Mission, and they have been duly audited, so what do the Japs matter?'

"For a full appreciation of that last sentence it should be known that he found account-keeping a great trial to the flesh. 'I look upon accounts,' he once wrote, 'as having an almost entirely utilitarian value. Therefore I maintain that if an error is only going to cost the Society sixpence, you are not justified in spending much more than sixpennyworth of time in seeking and correcting it.'

"So he was left—with his accounts duly audited. I managed to get a wireless message to him soon after this, telling him of our gratitude and wishing him well. He was able to cable a reply—the last wireless message to leave the island before the Japanese occupation. It was the shortest cable I have ever received; just one word—'Thanks.' For eighteen months after that there was silence.

"We wondered a lot about him. For a long time it was not very clear whether the



Japanese were in occupation or whether they had just made a nuisance raid and destroyed all means of communication. Later we gathered that life had gone on pretty placidly for a long time. Inter-island visitation was no longer possible, of course, so the loneliness must have been all the greater.

"His stock of tinned food (needed by a European to supplement the very limited and monotonous diet produced on the island) could not be replaced. But there was work to be done, schools to be looked after, a little theological college to be kept going, medical work, translation work, preaching and pastoral service. Sadd just carried on cheerfully and patiently with all this, and more than a year after his death his faithfully written reports on this period duly reached us.

"But by this time he had met—and passed—his biggest test of all. And he had met it with his incorrigible cheerfulness. What happened can best be told in the words of a native parishioner whose letter reached us only recently.

### Fearless Defiance of Japanese

"The Japanese had come and Sadd was hauled up before the local commander. 'He went,' wrote his Gilbertese friend, 'without fear. He was not at all troubled or heavy-hearted.'

"Then,' the letter continues, 'when they reached the commander's headquarters a Union Jack was spread out in his path so that he would tread upon it. But on reaching the flag Mr. Sadd stooped down, took it up in his hands, kissed it, and presented it to the officer who was sitting beside the commander. The Japanese marvelled at him and stared. . . .'

"The next brief period is somewhat obscure. He seems to have been a prisoner for a time and to have been put on to forced labour. Then, with the first stages of the battle for Tarawa, in which two thousand Americans lost their lives in the landing, it seems that the Japanese expected trouble with their handful of prisoners—about twenty Europeans and New Zealanders. So they decided to get rid of them all—by death. Here are further extracts from the same letter:

"They stood in a line, Mr. Sadd in the middle, and presently Mr. Sadd went out and stood in front of them and spoke words of cheer. When he had finished he went back and stood a little in front of them so that he would be the first to die. Then came a Jap and struck him with his sword, and all the Europeans clapped their hands and

were happy and unafraid when they saw his courage.'

"Well, there's a story of a very gallant gentleman. He is not alone in his heroism, his devotion to duty, his cheerfulness. Thank God these qualities are being proved in thousands. But there is something about this life, in its single-mindedness, the purpose to which everything else was subordinate, and the faith in which the worst was met and conquered, that carries its own peculiar power.

"When rumours of the end first reached us they came with the official announcement that he was 'Missing, believed killed.' I took the liberty of altering this phrase, making it read: 'Missing, believed immortal.'" (*Broadcast in the B.B.C.'s Pacific Service.*)

### BRITISH RESTORE BURMESE MISSION CHURCH AFTER JAPANESE PROFANATION

Before the war, twelve British and forty-two Burmese people, all Christians, worshipped at a tiny wooden church in Katha, on the Irrawaddy River. Once a month the chaplain travelled by river-boat or train from Mandalay to conduct the Communion Service, while Methodist lay preachers took the remaining services, and a woman missionary played the small organ.

When the Japanese invaded, the church was deserted, and the population fled to the hills or the jungle valleys. The Japanese came to Katha, and a Japanese Quartermaster established his stores in the church. Two and a half years later the British returned to Katha. "I was with them and saw the mischief, the neglect and the filth that was the Japanese legacy," writes an officer observer. "I went into Katha with troops of the 36th Division. The Japanese had left broken, derelict, dirty houses and uncared-for roads, fields and gardens. The wooden church with its cross intact, but its sides collapsed and its interior a dump of putrid Japanese clothing, was almost unrecognizable as a former place of worship." Men of the Gloucestershire Regiment arrived, and their padre, the Rev. J. Sparrow, a former missionary in Borneo, said: "This will be our church." The Gloucesters cleared the last traces of Japanese occupation. An altar was built and covered with a blue and gold parachute, and a new cross placed upon it. Rails were fashioned for the altar and covered with a white parachute, and pews were made for the congregation. Throughout Christmas the padre conducted services, which were attended by many people.



The Burmese by this time were returning to their homes in Katha, and were delighted to find there Miss Vivian Wynn, a member of the Women's Auxiliary Service of Burma. Miss Wynn was the missionary who had played the organ in the church and had worked for years in the district of Katha before leaving in 1942. Now she had come back as a canteen worker for the British soldiers, and was acclaimed by the Burmese, who know her as "mama," which means "sister."

The Gloucesters and their padre have now moved on, but the little wooden church still has its services, and a temporary caretaker in Sergeant Harold Phillips, of Bristol, who places fresh flowers on the altar each week. Soon the tide of the British advance will have passed through Katha completely, but for those who remain there is once more a place of worship.

### "EDGING THE RURAL COMMUNITY UPWARD"

A correspondent writes:

"An unusual conference was held from January 2nd to 5th at Westhill Training College, Selly Oak, with the above title (drawn from a modern American book on Rural Reconstruction in Macedonia). This Rural Life Conference (organized by the Church Missionary Society) drew delegates from very varied walks of life; doctors, nurses, educationists, agriculturists and parsons from various parts of East, West and Central Africa, including African nationals, from Ethiopia, India, China and the Middle East, and from Canada and the U.S.A., met with many of their opposite numbers in Britain, including representatives of the Rural Community Councils, Young Farmers' Clubs, Agricultural Colleges and Government officials, to discuss some of the vital aspects of rural life at home and abroad. A consideration of the fundamental structure

of life in the countryside led to realistic discussions on the relationship of agriculture, education and the health services to rural welfare, and from there the conference looked out to the inevitable demands of a new era. Members' thoughts were turned to the task as it faced this country and similar aspects were considered from abroad.

"This forum was fortunate in having such a range of experience available from men and women concerned with the well-being of rural communities in many parts of the world, and this was made additionally valuable by the presence of missionaries of six of the major Societies alongside those who are intimately cognizant of the rural problems as they affect Britain.

"Certain convictions evolved from the conference which should be of more than local interest; the fundamental identity of rural problems throughout the world opened up the tragic position at present where there is practically no effective interchange of ideas between the different areas of the world. Another potent impression was that from every field, evidence came of a lack of leadership in rural reconstruction, and closely connected to this was the common agreement that the very best minds are necessary to find the means of approach through traditional channels which is so essential a process in rural welfare whether it be in Worcestershire or West Africa.

"The outstanding fact emerging from such cross-fertilization of ideas is that if the values of human personality are to be preserved in the days of very rapid social change which lie immediately ahead, the fundamental qualities of the country men of all lands, rooted as they are in the rhythm of life, will have to be an integral part in any future planning for a Christian democratic world. A task is here at hand needing the co-operation of Christian and secular bodies both at home and overseas and the service which men and women of vision can give."